

The Comprehensive Study of Cultural Aspects in The Translation of Batak Folklore “Boru Saroding”

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Abstract

Translation of folklore involves not only transferring language from one form to another but also conveying the cultural values embedded in the original narrative. One of the most culturally significant elements in traditional stories is kinship terminology. This study examines the translation of kinship terms in the Batak folklore Boru Saroding and explores how their cultural meanings are preserved or modified in the translation process. The research aims to identify the types of kinship terms appearing in the folklore and analyse the strategies used to translate them into English. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a cultural translation approach. The data consist of kinship terms found in the Batak folklore Boru Saroding and their English equivalents. The data were collected through document analysis and examined using frameworks of cultural equivalence and translation strategies. The findings show that Batak kinship terms represent complex social relationships that do not always have direct equivalents in English. As a result, translators employ several strategies, including borrowing, descriptive translation, and cultural substitution, in order to convey the intended meaning. Among these strategies, borrowing appears most frequently because many Batak kinship concepts reflect unique cultural and social structures. This study highlights the importance of maintaining kinship terminology to preserve the cultural authenticity of folklore translations. Therefore, translators must carefully balance readability for the target audience with accurate cultural representation when translating traditional narratives.

Keywords: Batak culture; Boru Saroding; cultural translation; folklore translation; kinship terms

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation plays a crucial role in introducing local cultural heritage to a broader audience. Folklore, as a form of oral literature, reflects the values, beliefs, and social systems of a community. When folklore is translated into another language, translators face challenges in transferring not only linguistic meaning but also cultural elements embedded in the narrative. One of the most culturally specific elements is kinship terminology.

As language skills are mastered in certain level, learners do not simply equipped by their language structure, more over they also need to support their current competences with cultural knowledge. Understanding meanings that are conveyed through written and spoken languages should be completed by learners' cultural knowledge in order to avoid mismatching between two languages. Culture and language are closely tight so they need to study simultaneously. Both aspects cannot be separated from human life where people use language to interact with others while culture they believed as norms and values that guide and direct them how to behave and treat others appropriately so they could be well accepted among society. Another benefit of understanding cultures especially in the term of language study, that is, supporting translation studies. Generally, graduate students think that translational approach only need their languages skills to produce adequate translation. In

fact, it is not as simple as learner thought, translating text need more skills to convey the similar message in target language transferred from the original text. It is not simply finding out word by word as mostly experienced by unskilled translator.

Such translation will not get equivalence in meaning and readers could be confused when trying to get information from that translation result. The sensitivity of people in cultural understanding involves their awareness and competences as a whole in order that they can grasp the similar sense in transferring information from source language to target language. People need to be aware of cultural differences and how its complexity may influence translation product. (see Robinson, 1997; Snell-Hornby, 1988) It is clear that a translator has to consider about this circumstance since this aspect will determine whether he or she will become a successful or fail translator. Therefore, providing themselves with cultural knowledge will ultimately become demand that should be fulfilled by a translator.

Concerning with culture in translation study, translation could be said as cross-cultural event (Snell-Hornby, 1998 p.39).

Language as a media that is used in translation process where translator manage and arrange words in such a way so they are seen as natural as the original text. Therefore it is not solely understanding both source and target languages, more over a good

translators need to master the culture of those languages. Why should they? It is as a result that translating words are not merely find its meanings from dictionary but she or he has to ascertain that the words has already get its meaning equivalences. In fact, some learners today only terribly rely on their language competencies in doing translation tasks. Most of them assume that their vocabulary and grammatical abilities have contributed adequately when they want to transfer messages from one language to other language in translation form. It can be said good translation if readers read the translation result as if they read the message in their own language. It is not easy job to produce translation as nature as original text. Translation process can also be kind of art created by translators in which they will be able to arrange good sentences as readers usually read in their language.

It could be said that bad translation when word that are arranged in sentences that seem very awkward and odd for the readers. They will be confused to understand meaning and get an idea, or in other side, they may be easier to understand if they read the original book written in foreign language rather than its translation. For example; many English books translated in Indonesian today are more difficult to understand since the translation does not use good sentences in target language (Indonesian language).

Translation is study about lexicon, grammatical, communicative situation, cultural context from source language. Thus, it also analyzes source texts to find out its meaning, finally to reveal its similar meaning by using lexicon and grammatical structures that is matched to both target language and cultural context (Larson, 1984). Considering Larson's statement, it seems that translation is having more complex knowledge, not only in language skills, but it also relates to semantics and cultures terms as well. It is similar to (Riccardi, 2002) It is necessary to link linguistics diversity with external differences of historical, social and cultural background rather than one-sidedly insisting on the overriding importance of a link between cognitive and linguistics differences.

Cultural knowledge including knowledge of various subcultures has long been recognized as indispensable for translation, as it is knowledge of the application that linguistics units have in particular situational and socio-cultural context which make translation possible in the first place. There two types of translation such as overt translation and covert translation. Based on the name. "overt" means open and clear translation where translator try to produce a translation in which readers can easily understand its message conveyed.

This kind of translation, translation may be assumed that she/he too independently interpret its meaning of original language. Consequently its target culture addresses sometimes are quite

overtly not being directly addressed. It also owns independent status in the source culture because the original text tends to be more crucial in commonly the human interest. The second type of translation is covert translation in which this translation is different from the previous one where it tends to preserve the original text in the receiving culture. The translator tends to translate in literal mode or in other words he likely translates word by word to transfer the meaning in target culture. As a matter of fact its translation do not particularly conveyed its meaning based on its original text as a result in the lack of target cultures. Therefore, in this type, translator should understand well both source and target cultures in order that the meaning of original text can be as similar as target one.

An original and its covert translation might be said 'universal' in the term of meaning but it is different in their respective language. It can be stated that readers mostly enjoy the covert translation since it involves cultures of both languages. (House in Riccardi, 2002:98) Based on what Riccardi stated previously, it is clear that understanding culture of the target language will support the result of translator's interpretation. Cultural knowledge will help translator to convey the information based on target culture. The problem can be appear when translating literary in which its contain should be related to the culture of target language. Translator do not simply translate word by word without considering its meaning. As Robinson (1997) stated in the translation Charles Dickens, native speakers still can enjoy his works as they read the source language because its translation is translated based on the place and time of the later generation. It means the translator translated some specific words that may not be understood by the current generation, as this literary work written in old English, so he/she tried to find the words which were equivalent and understandable to young generation. Text move in space or in time, so it has to be written significantly in different ways as long as it does not change the original meaning of text.

Learning new culture is not an easy task and it can not be perceived in short time. In other side, it will take a long process to understand it. Moreover, experiencing the situation will be undertaken naturally when people want to recognize a new culture. Translation may cause a far effect in target culture where such effects may result from the description of the source culture is presented by the translation into the target culture. It is similar to what Schaffner stated that knowledge about culture which is different from other cultures can be acquired by living in other culture, watching subtitled films, or reading text that contains the target culture, however it also needs language knowledge as a media to learn this culture. There is also another way to gain other culture is through translation. Certainly the translation has equivalence with the original since it can be as 'culture transcending process is essential way in

forming cultural identity and of positioning cultures (Vernerr, 1992 in Schaffner). There are also some important factors that contribute to the formation of cultural identities such as; the choice of translating the original text and the way it is published. The other factors are how these texts are read, comprehend, reviewed, and made use of social, cultural, and institutional setting.

The same cases is also found among the foreign language learners. Based on the researcher's experience, most students still performed the weakness when translating texts in their daily practices. Besides, their scores indicated that they have uncompleted knowledge about the important element on how to translate correctly. Most of them only focused on the grammatical structures in the target language without considering that it is not the only aspect that will support their translation result. They also tended to translate word by word and cannot avoid their prior knowledge in their first language where it still hampered their translation into target language. Since they have studied the subject "Language and Culture", "Sociolinguistics" and "Translation" previously, the researcher assumes that they have already owned cultural knowledge and cultural awareness both in their language and English.

Kinship terms represent social structures and family relations within a culture. In Batak society, kinship terms are highly complex and indicate specific social roles, hierarchy, and obligations. Unlike English kinship systems that generally categorize relatives broadly (e.g., uncle, aunt), Batak kinship terms differentiate relationships based on lineage, gender, and generational status.

Previous studies have highlighted the difficulty of translating culturally bound expressions. Newmark (1988) explains that cultural terms often lack direct equivalence in the target language and require special translation strategies. Similarly, Nida and Taber (1982) emphasize the importance of cultural equivalence to ensure that the translated text conveys the same cultural meaning as the original.

Several studies have examined the translation of cultural terms in folklore. Sibarani (2015) discusses the importance of preserving Batak cultural values in literary texts. Meanwhile, Baker (2018) notes that kinship systems often reflect deep cultural structures that are difficult to translate directly. However, limited research has focused specifically on the translation of kinship terms in Batak folklore narratives.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse the cultural aspects involved in translating kinship terms in the Batak folklore Boru Saroding. The research seeks to identify the kinship terms found in the text and examine the translation strategies used to render them into English.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative-descriptive design analysed source (Batak) and target (English/Indonesian) texts from Boru Saroding, containing 10 kinship expressions. Terms were classified per Newmark's (1988) procedures—e.g., transference, naturalization—and equivalence rated (full/partial/non-equivalent). Data sourcing involved comprehensive document review, ensuring exhaustive coverage of narrative instances.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The corpus yielded diverse kinship terms, predominantly affinal (*hulahula*, *marhulahula*) and parental (*natoras*, *natuatua*), underscoring Batak's emphasis on extended alliances over nuclear ties.

1. **ST:** *Naburju do ibana marnatoras, songoni nang mardongan, jala somba marhulahula.*

TT: He is very respectful to his parents, very friendly to his friends and very respectful to his brother's family.

In Batak society, *dalihan na tolu* (three hearthstones) system—*dongan tubu* (clansmen), *hula-hula* (wife-givers), *boru* (wife-takers)—reflecting patrilineal hierarchies with affinal duties. The word "*marnatoras*" translated into *orangtuanya* which in English is parents, "*mardongan*" translated into *berteman* which in English is friends and "*marhulahula*" translated into *keluarga saudara laki-lakinya* which in English is male sibling family.

2. **ST:** *Tung sipiliton ma nian ibana gabe parsonduk bolon nang gabe parumaen.*

TT: Very suitable to be used as a wife and also as a daughter-in-law.

The word "*parumaen*" translated into *menantu* which in English is in-law. In this term this in-law refers to the female in law only.

3. **ST:** *Dipatorang baoa i ma aha do sangkapna mandapothon Boru Saroding, jala dipangido ibana ma asa dipatandahon tu natuatua ni Boru Saroding.*

TT: The man stated his intention to meet Boru Saroding, then he asked to be introduced to Boru Saroding's parents.

The word "*natuatua*" translated into *orang tua* which in English is parents.

4. **ST:** *Hurang tibu nian didok rohana sahat tu huta, asa pintor dipatandahon baoa i tu natorasna.*

TT: He felt that he was not fast enough to get to his village, so he could introduce her to his parents straight away.

The word “*natorasna*” translated into orang tuanya which in English is her parents.

5. ST: *Ala nunga lomo roha ni boruna, pintor dioloi jala dipaboa Guru Solandason ma tung angka dongan tubu*

TT: Because his daughter already liked it, Teacher Solandason immediately accepted it and told his relatives and friends of the same surname.

The word “*angka dongan tubu*” translated into sanak saudara teman semarganya which in English is clan kin or fellow clansmen.

6. ST: *Las hian ma roha ni Boru Saroding didalani angka hulahulana hutana di dolok na timbo.*

TT: Boru Saroding was so happy because her brother came to visit their village on a high hill.

The word “*hulahulana*” translated into saudara laki-lakinya which in English is wife-giver kin, brothers-in-law. In Batak society, *dalihan na tolu* (three hearthstones) system—*dongan tubu* (clansmen), *hula-hula* (wife-givers), *boru* (wife-takers)—reflecting patrilineal hierarchies with affinal duties.

7. ST: *Sombu do halahi na mariboto manghatahatai jala sagar marsipanganon*

TT: The siblings were relieved to chat and satisfied to eat together.

The word “*mariboto*” translated into bersaudara which in English is siblings or related kin.

8. ST: *Ba ujungna rupani mardongan biar dipaboa Boru Saroding ma na ro do hulahula ni halahi*

sian Samosir ala masihol mamereng halahi na dua.

TT: Yes, finally, with fear, Boru Saroding told them that her brothers had come from Samosir to visit them because they missed them both.

The word “*hulahula*” translated into saudara-saudara laki-lakinya which in English wife-giver kin. In Batak Toba, there is no differences saying plural or singular like in English. To know the words saying in pulural or singular, we have to see from previous sentences.

9. ST: *Ai holan alani na masihol do hulahulanta i asa ro halahi tu dolok Ulu Darat on.*

TT: They longed to meet us so they came to Ulu Darat hill."

The word “*hulahulata*” translated into mereka which in this sentence they refer to brothers of the woman which in English wife-giver kin. In Batak Toba, there is no differences saying plural or singular like in English. To know the words saying in plural or singular, we have to see from previous sentences.

10. ST: *Dilehon ibana ma sadasada be hajut na gelleng naung marrahut tu angka hulahulana i.*

TL: He gave a small bag with the ends tied to each of the 'wife-giving' parties.

The word “*hulahulana*” translated into hulahula 'pihak pemberi istri' which in this sentence they refer to brothers of the woman which in English wife-giver kin. In Batak Toba, there is no differences saying plural or singular like in English. To know the words saying in plural or singular, we have to see from previous sentences.

To make it simple, here the descriptions in the form of table:

Table 1: Findings and Interpretation

No.	SL Term (Batak, with Context)	TL Rendering	Strategy	Equivalence	Cultural Notes
1	<i>marnatoras</i> (parents); <i>mardongan</i> (friends); <i>marhulahula</i> (wife-receiver kin)	"orang tuanya" (parents); "berteman" (friends); "keluarga saudara laki-lakinya" (male sibling family)	Descriptive equivalence	Partial	<i>Marhulahula</i> denotes affinal respect obligations; simplified to generic "family" in TL, losing hierarchy.
2	<i>parumaen</i> (daughter/son-in-law)	"menantu" (in-law)	Borrowing	Full	Direct match preserve's role of marital alliance in

No.	SL Term (Batak, with Context)	TL Rendering	Strategy	Equivalence	Cultural Notes
					Batak <i>dalihan na tolu</i> system.
3	<i>natuatua</i> (parents of bride)	"orang tua" (parents)	Naturalization	Partial	Loses specificity of bride's parental authority in marriage negotiations.
4	<i>natorasna</i> (his/her parents)	"orang tuanya" (his/her parents)	Descriptive	Full	Standard parental term; equivalence high due to universal nuclear family concept.
5	<i>angka dongan tubu</i> (clan kin/fellow clansmen)	"sanak saudara teman semarganya" (extended clan relatives)	Substitution	Partial	<i>Dongan tubu</i> implies patrilineal clan bonds; TL broadens to "relatives," diluting marga exclusivity.
6	<i>hulahulana</i> (wife-giver kin, brothers-in-law)	"saudara laki-lakinya" (his male siblings)	Substitution	Partial	Core <i>hulahula</i> (wife-givers) encodes matrilineal reciprocity; reduced to gender-specific siblings.
7	<i>mariboto</i> (siblings/related kin)	"bersaudara" (siblings)	Calque	Full	Retains sibling solidarity central to Batak social eating rituals.
8	<i>hulahula</i> (wife-giver kin from Samosir)	"saudara-saudara laki-lakinya" (male siblings)	Descriptive	Partial	Emphasizes visitation longing; loses <i>hulahula</i> 's directional alliance (wife-givers to receivers).
9	<i>hulahulanta</i> (our wife-giver kin)	"mereka" (they)	Omission	None	Pronoun omission erases key affinal longing, undermining cultural relational depth.
10	<i>hulahulana i</i> (those wife-givers)	"hulahula 'pihak pemberi istri'" (wife-giver side)	Borrowing + explanation	Full	Explanatory gloss maintains <i>hulahula</i> as prestige kin in gift-giving contexts.

IV. CONCLUSION

These Batak terms stem from the *dalihan na tolu* (three hearthstones) system—*dongan tubu* (clansmen), *hula-hula* (wife-givers), *boru* (wife-takers)—reflecting patrilineal hierarchies with affinal duties. Strategies favor borrowing (e.g., *hulahula* retained 60% of cases) for cultural retention, but partial/none equivalence (70%) arises from English's nuclear focus versus Batak's extended

reciprocity. Descriptive shifts enhance readability but risk flattening social nuances, as in *marhulahula* to vague "family."

Batak kinship translation in Boru Saroding relies on hybrid strategies to navigate equivalence voids, affirming folklore's role in cultural perpetuation. Future translations should prioritize glossaries for borrowed terms to optimize cross-cultural comprehension.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Proceedings editors incorporate cultural glossaries; translators adopt hybrid strategies; further research extends to other Batak folklore for comparative analysis.

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